



Network Consumer News



Chad Lennox is Northwest Renal Network's new Executive Director

Changes to Dialysis Payments

Editorial by Chad Lennox, MPH

You might have heard people in your dialysis facility speaking about and preparing for “the bundle.” But what is this? How will it affect you? What can you do?

The bundle is Medicare’s new way of paying for dialysis treatments beginning in January 2011. Instead of paying the different parts of your dialysis separately, Medicare will provide facilities with one payment for your total treatment. This single bundled payment will now cover your treatment, labs, supplies and certain medicines such as EPO, iron and Vitamin D.

Many of you might not see any changes when the bundle goes into effect. However, others might see changes in a few areas:

- **Coinsurance.** Medicare will cover 80 percent of bundle treatment costs whether you use all of the services or not. You (or your coinsurance) will still be responsible for the remaining 20 percent. However, since Medicare’s payment level will now depend on factors such as age, body size and certain illnesses, your coinsurance might increase, decrease or stay the same.
- **Lab Tests.** Traditionally Medicare has paid the full cost of lab tests related to dialysis. However, since they will now be included in the bundle, you will now owe a copayment on these tests. Non-dialysis related labs and transplant tests ordered by your physician will not have a copayment.
- **Medications.** Your facility will now be in charge of providing you with certain medicines. Some patients will receive the medicines in the facility. Others will have to travel to a specific pharmacy. Facilities might have certain brands they prefer over others. As a result, your physician might suggest a different medicine, dose or frequency. Certain medicines might be given in a different manner. For example, EPO might be given as an injection under the skin instead of in your IV.

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LEARNING POINT

Tell your health care team if you have concerns about changes in your care during this transition to the new bundled payment system.

RELATED RESOURCES

Kidney Health Care Coverage
www.kidneydrugcoverage.org

Kidney School
www.kidneyschool.org

- Patient Rights and Responsibilities
- Working with Your Healthcare Team

Northwest Renal Network
www.nwrenalnetwork.org

- Free patient education materials on Patient Rights and other topics

Northwest Renal Network
4702 42nd Ave SW
Seattle, WA 98116
Fax 206.923.0716

**Patient
Toll-Free Number**
1.800.262.1514

www.nwrenalnetwork.org

Changes to Dialysis Payments – What Can You Do?

It is important to be an active partner in your care. Ask your physician about any changes in medicines or treatment. Notify your physician of any side effects you might notice and keep track of your labs so you can discuss them with your physician if needed.

We want to know if you have any significant changes in your care during this transition to the new bundled payment system. If you have concerns about your care or want to file a grievance, please contact Northwest Renal Network toll-free at 1.800.262.1514.

Emergency (*ih-mur-juhn-see*) – a sudden, urgent, usually unexpected occurrence or occasion requiring immediate action.



When an emergency happens, your access to water, power, transportation, or supplies may be limited. You may not be able to get to your dialysis unit for treatment or give yourself treatments at home. Take these steps to get ready now:

- Ask your facility how to contact staff in emergencies, where to go for care if your facility is closed, and how to get vital medical records.
- Plan for back-up transportation to dialysis.
- Get a copy of the emergency diet and keep emergency supplies on-hand.
- Keep an updated medicine/allergies list with you.
- Create a personal evacuation plan.
- Put all important personal papers together with your emergency supplies.

For more planning information for people with kidney failure, visit <http://www.nwrenalnetwork.org/E/emergency.htm>.

Patient Events

- The National Kidney Foundation’s Spring 2011 Patient & Care Partner Education Symposium is scheduled for March 20, 2011, in Portland, OR. The topic is “Life With Kidney Disease.” Register online for this free event at <http://www.kidneyca.org/programs.asp>. For more information, call NKF at 1.888.427.5653.
- National Kidney Foundation’s Kidney Early Evaluation Program (KEEP) will host a free kidney health screening in Portland, OR on Saturday, March 19, 2011. Spread the word to others who have a family history of diabetes, blood pressure, or kidney disease. To register call 1.888.427.5653 or e-mail patty.mccormac@kidney.org.

DID YOU KNOW there are 6 types of dialysis? And 5 can be done at home. For more information visit Home Dialysis Central at www.homedialysis.org.